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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

The A B C's of Canned Fruits and Vegetables

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Paul Williams, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, November 21, 1935.

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MR. SALISBURY: Here's your friend, Miss Ruth Van Deman, the regular spokesman for the Bureau of Home Economics. And with her today is Mr. Paul Williams from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. They tell me, they're going to talk about the A B C's of canned fruits and vegetables. Which I take it, Miss Van Deman, means the A B C system of labeling canned foods with quality grades.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, that's right. I asked Mr. Williams to come over with me today and tell us how the grading and labeling of canned goods is coming along. When Mr. Sherman and I talked about the plan three years or so ago on the Farm and Home Hour, it hadn't actually carried through to the consumer. Now it has. I know because I've seen cans labeled Grade A, and Grade B, and Grade C on the grocery shelves myself. And I've bought graded canned foods and used them in my own home. Mr. Williams, is it true that hundreds of thousands of cans with grade labels have already gone into the retail trade?

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. And you can raise that hundreds of thousands to millions and still not be overstating the case. It's hard to get a figure that includes all graded canned goods. But I have it on very good authority that at least eighty-eight million labels have been applied to canned goods during the last eleven months. These labels have the words Grade A, Grade B, or Grade C clearly printed on them to show the exact quality of the food inside each one of those eighty-eight million cans. And we also know for a fact that thousands of retail grocery stores well distributed over the country are offering their customers grade-labeled canned vegetables.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Vegetables? Is it only canned vegetables that are labeled according to grade? Aren't fruits marked that way too?

MR. WILLIAMS: So far, in the fruits, I've seen printed grade labels only for sour red cherries. But the plan is working on many vegetables - corn, peas, and tomatoes; snap beans and lima beans; beets, spinach, and sauerkraut. Oh, yes, and tomato juice and tomato catsup.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That makes eight vegetables, besides the tomato juice and catsup, but only one fruit. Couldn't this quality grading be extended to other products if people realized how helpful consumers find it?

MR. WILLIAMS: It certainly could. This is one of the matters where consumers can have what they want if they just speak up and ask for it.

MISS VAN DEMAN: It's just a question of carrying the grades through from the wholesale to the retail trade, isn't it?

(over)

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, all canned goods are handled by grade in the wholesale trade. As one man I know puts it, "Every canner knows his grades. Every broker quotes by grades. Every jobber buys by grades. Every delivery made by canner to jobber must conform to the grade specified in the sales contract".

MISS VAN DEMAN: Tell us this, Mr. Williams, according to the A B C system of quality rating, where does the bulk of canned goods fall?

MR. WILLIAMS: Probably in the Standard, or Grade C, class, but I have no figures to prove it. It's a little bit with canned goods as it is with us humans. Think of the youngsters in school. Taken by and large, there are more C's on report cards than either A's or B's. So in grading canned goods about 45 to 50 percent rate as Grade C, or Standard. Only about 10 to 15 percent is Fancy, or Grade A. In between comes Grade B, or Choice, as we term the quality immediately below the Fancy, Grade A.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, in buying tomatoes, for instance, I find Grade C perfectly satisfactory for scalloped dishes, soups, and stews, and general purposes.

MR. WILLIAMS: Of course you do. They're standard product - good, wholesome food. And I take it when you want something fancy you ask for Grade A tomatoes and are willing to pay the higher price because you know you are getting the higher quality.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, that's the way it works with this consumer.

Mr. Williams, I wish there were time for you to tell us the differences between Grade A and B and C for tomatoes, and peas, and corn, and all the rest. But we'll have to let that go until another day. Or better still, can't you mail these descriptions to anyone who wants them?

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, I'll be glad to. We have printed copies of the U. S. standards for grades of canned tomatoes, peas, beans, corn - all the foods we've mentioned today and some others besides. We're always ready to answer questions about the grading of canned foods.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Williams, for all your help today. And goodbye Everybody, until next week.